

Captain William Sewall Nickels of Maine: An Extraordinary Seafaring Life

In the annals of maritime history, the name Captain William Sewall Nickels stands out as a beacon of adventure, resilience, and maritime excellence. Born in 1825 in the coastal town of Thomaston, Maine, Nickels embarked on a remarkable seafaring career that spanned over four decades and left an indelible mark on the pages of maritime lore.



Fifty Five Years at Sea: Captain William Sewall Nickels of Maine by Monica Ruth Pattangall

★★★★★ 5 out of 5
Language : English
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Screen Reader: Supported
Print length : 568 pages
Lending : Enabled



Early Life and Apprenticeship

Nickels's love for the sea was ignited at a tender age, growing up in a bustling shipbuilding community where the salty tang of the ocean permeated the air. At the age of 14, he commenced his apprenticeship under Captain Judah Nickels, his uncle, aboard the brigantine *Active*. It was here that he honed his skills in navigation, seamanship, and the art of commanding a ship.



Voyages and Adventures

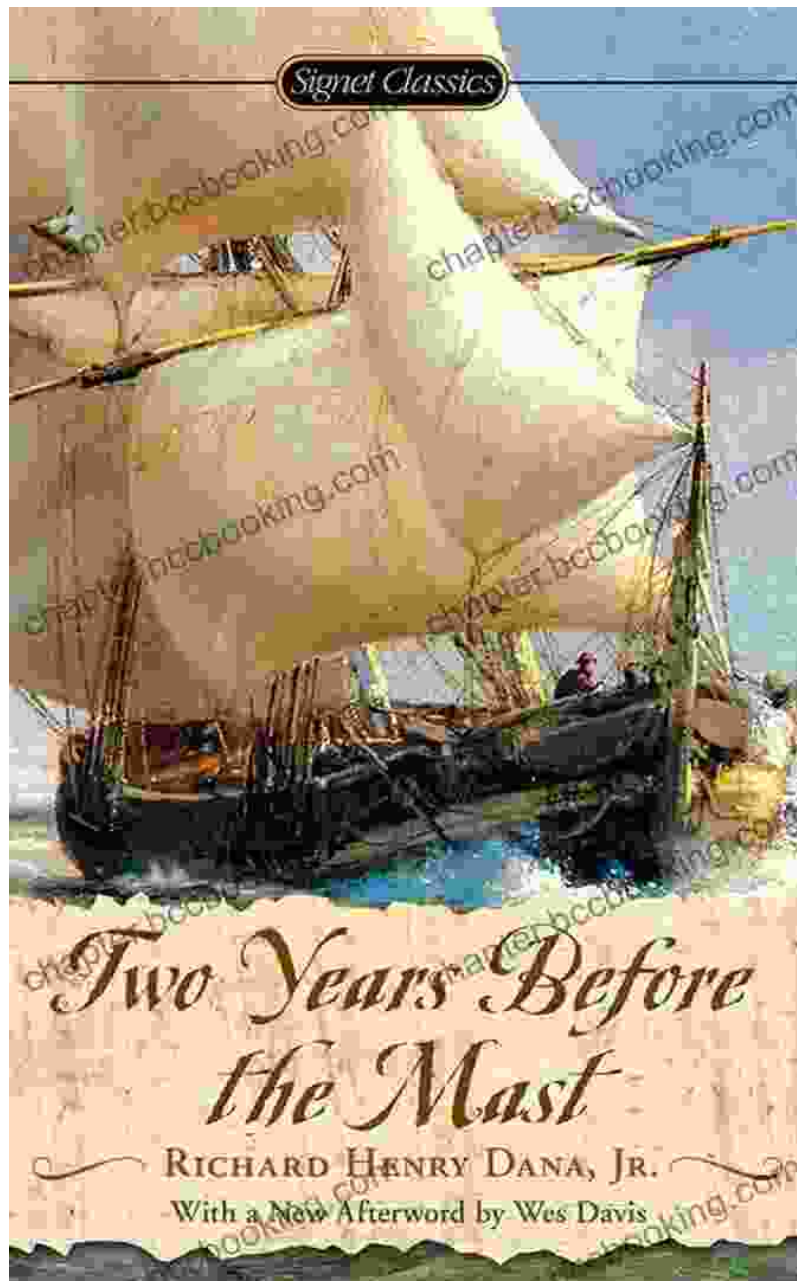
Nickels's apprenticeship laid the foundation for a career that would take him to far-flung corners of the globe. He sailed on clipper ships, carrying cargo between the United States and Europe. He braved the treacherous waters of the Arctic, hunting for whales, and witnessed firsthand the harsh realities of the California Gold Rush. His adventurous spirit led him to explore the

uncharted territories of the Pacific, forging new trade routes and encountering exotic cultures.

- In 1851, he commanded the clipper ship *Surprise* on a voyage to San Francisco, setting a record-breaking time for the passage around Cape Horn.
- During the Civil War, he captained the revenue cutter *Joe Lane*, patrolling the coastline and enforcing the blockade against Confederate ships.
- In 1868, he undertook a whaling voyage to the Arctic aboard the bark *Rainbow*, facing perilous ice conditions and encounters with polar bears.

Legacy and Autobiography

Throughout his illustrious career, Nickels earned a reputation as a skilled navigator, a courageous leader, and a true gentleman of the sea. His autobiography, *Two Years before the Mast*, published in 1847, became a maritime classic, offering a firsthand account of life aboard an American clipper ship during the golden age of sail.



Nickels's contributions to maritime history extend beyond his own adventures. He served as a director of the Maine Seamen's Aid Society, advocating for the well-being of sailors and their families. He also played a pivotal role in establishing the Maine Maritime Museum, preserving the rich maritime heritage of his home state.

Captain William Sewall Nickels of Maine stands as a towering figure in American maritime history. His extraordinary life, filled with adventure, trials, and triumphs, embodies the spirit of exploration, resilience, and unwavering dedication to the sea. His autobiography remains an invaluable resource for historians and seafaring enthusiasts alike, offering a glimpse into the golden age of sail and the indomitable character of one of its most celebrated sea captains.

For those fascinated by the captivating world of 19th-century seafaring, the story of Captain William Sewall Nickels is an unmissable tale of adventure, history, and maritime excellence.



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